



LOS ANGELES COUNTY COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Kimberly A. Foster
Executive Director

COMMISSIONERS:
CAROL O. BIONDI
PATRICIA CURRY
ANN FRANZEN
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DR. LA-DORIS MCCLANEY
REV. CECIL L. MURRAY
SANDRA RUDNICK, VICE CHAIR
STACEY SAVELLE
ADELINA SORKIN, LCSW/ACSW, VICE CHAIR
DR. HARRIETTE F. WILLIAMS
TRULA J. WORTHY-CLAYTON

APPROVED MINUTES

The General Meeting of the Commission for Children and Families was held on Monday, June 4, 2007, in room 739 of the Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration, 500 West Temple Street, Los Angeles. Please note that these minutes are intended as a summary and not as a verbatim transcription of events at this meeting.

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT (Quorum Established)

Patricia Curry
Ann E. Franzen
Helen A. Kleinberg
Dr. La-Doris McClaney
Rev. Cecil L. Murray
Sandra Rudnick
Stacey Savelle
Adelina Sorkin
Dr. Harriette F. Williams
Trula J. Worthy-Clayton

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT (Excused/Unexcused)

Carol O. Biondi
Susan F. Friedman
Wendy L. Ramallo

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The agenda for the June 4, 2007, meeting was unanimously approved.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the May 21, 2007, general meeting were unanimously approved.

CHAIR'S REPORT

- Chair Kleinberg thanked everyone for their support during her recent absence; she informed everyone that nine weeks out from his kidney transplant, that her husband is doing well.

- Commissioners discussed cancellation of the July 2, 2007 regular meeting. The Chair stated, although the Commission often cancels its first July meeting, which falls around the Independence Day Holiday, action would need to take place by the Commission to cancel the July 2, 2007 meeting. Commissioner Rudnick suggested polling the Commission to determine who might be in attendance. Discussion determined that a quorum of Commissioners would be available for the July 2 meeting this year, and it would take place.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

In the absence of Department of Children and Family Services director Trish Ploehn, who was in Washington, DC, Susan Kerr updated Commissioners on several issues.

- Department personnel are working diligently to meet two June 30, 2007 submission deadlines: the Title IV-E Waiver Implementation Plan to the Board of Supervisors, and the Katie A. response plan to the Court. Regarding Katie A, Judge Matz recently issued an order asking a series of “wrap-up” questions for the panel, plaintiffs, and the County—mostly about funding for the Katie A. proposals. The County filed a timely response. Concerns have arisen about whether Federal EPSDT (Early Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment) funds can be used for assessments, and the Court has requested a meeting with the Katie A. parties, the panel, State DHS, and DMH to resolve the issue.

A similar question about whether IV-E Waiver Funds can be used to match EPSDT monies was raised weeks ago, but no official response has yet been received. Alameda County, another IV-W Waiver participant, agrees that carving out the portion of the capped Waiver allocation in excess of 50 percent of total State and County Funds could be a legal way to match Federal Funds. Such leverage could help with both the IV-W Waiver and with Katie A. compliance, and further monies could aid undocumented children.

In addition, one member of the Katie A. panel maintains that Federal Rules make any child who is at risk for entering the Foster Care system, but who does not necessarily have an open DCFS case, eligible for Medi-Cal. If that can be confirmed and implemented, it would have vast implications for Los Angeles County's Health, Mental Health, and Child Welfare Systems.

- With regard to the one-page “Fact Sheet” for Relative Caregivers mentioned at a previous meeting, Chair Kleinberg clarified that it should lay out the key steps that Relatives must take to qualify as formal caregivers—getting fingerprinted, etc.—rather than simply review the contents of the larger information packet. In times of crisis, relatives need a fast and easy guide to immediate action, along with contact information for more details. Ms. Kerr promised a draft by the next Commission meeting.

- **Ongoing DCFS budget curtailment discussions have touched on the negative consequences to the Title IV-E Waiver's effectiveness if waiver funding is used to cover increases in the department's normal cost of doing business. Susan Kerr informed the Commission it is not DCFS's intent to use waiver funding to balance its budget, and hoped-for waiver results that will not be achieved by doing so. State Realignment Funds are lower than anticipated this year, but the department, which is not involved in that budgeting process, should not be penalized for that.**
- **On the bright side, final numbers have been received from the state for the Waiver's capped allocation, and they are \$8 million more dollars than originally projected.**
- **A meeting with the Auditor-Controller's office, DCFS, and the Association of Community Human Services Agencies (ACHSA) will take place on Wednesday, June 6, 2007 in the District 4 Office. Participants will discuss the County's recent determination that contracting out the Adoptions and Safe Families Act (ASFA) Relative Home Assessments would not be cost-effective. ACHSA is concerned that the County's analysis does not compare apples to apples, and that the county may have understated its costs in comparison to the private sector. Ms. Kerr will be briefed on the issues tomorrow, and will report on the meeting to Commissioners.**

Commissioner Williams expressed concerns stating costs aside, programmatic issues still surround these inspections. Even when trained departmental Social Workers perform home assessments, Relatives are often abused and offended by the process. Commissioner Williams and Chair Kleinberg both indicated that using contractors will take yet another step away from good practice, and further offend people the system so desperately needs. What's best for children and relatives must remain the bottom line.

- **A private recruiting firm with long experience in meeting County government needs is conducting a nationwide search to fill the Senior Deputy Director position now vacant within DCFS. A candidate list has been promised by the end of the month, with the expectation of interviewing the top five to ten applicants.**

Ms. Ploehn will recruit for other Senior Positions. Her own former slot (being covered temporarily by Diane Wagner) must be permanently filled. Additionally, Lisa Parrish's Service Bureau position following her appointment as Title IV-E Waiver Manager is vacant and will need to be filled. In addition, negotiations are nearly finalized with Casey Family Programs to provide funding for two Waiver Management Team Positions, and with other consulting services.

The Chair inquired whether Casey will provide support for the term with the Waiver. Susan Kerr reported although Casey budgets annually and cannot

commit to this support for the full term of the waiver, DCFS has asked for contract language expressing Casey's intent to fund these positions for the full five years, in accordance with a Board of Supervisors requirement for a stable funding source prior to approving additional personnel items. Ms. Kerr promised to send Commissioners the Casey Family Programs deliverables when they are available.

- Ms. Kerr discussed the handout summarizing the responsibilities of DCFS's Health and Safety Section that was recently moved to the Risk Management Division at the request of incoming division chief Paul Buehler. The section manages the health and safety of DCFS employees, dealing with medical and other leaves, workers compensation, Americans with Disabilities Act compliance, ergonomic workstations, and so on. Other risk management sections include internal affairs, litigation, and child fatalities/ critical incidents. This last section in particular needs to be better organized and managed, but Mr. Buehler feels that it is a key piece in the risk management function.

Vice Chair Sorkin asked how many DCFS employees are currently on medical leave; and the Chair inquired about the percent of employees who return to work with limitations who are assigned to ASFA. When the new Kinship Division was formed, Commissioner Williams reported, it was staffed with employees returning from leave, which reduced the quality of workers needed for the very intense ASFA assessment function. She suggested that returning staff be distributed evenly throughout a given division, not just in one place, and Ms. Kerr—who acknowledged hearing similar stories from other sections—assured her that the issue was being looked at and will provide the information to the Commission.

- Ms. Kerr distributed information on 30- and 90-day reports on child fatalities, stressing the fact that these reports are not done for every child death in the county, but only for victims known to the department who meet the criteria outlined. Commissioner Worthy-Clayton asked for clarification on whether this would include all referrals to the DCFS Hotline, Ms. Kerr stated yes. The Chair indicated there were reports that there might be “creaming” of reports which result in fewer 30 and 90 day reports.
- An all-day Learning Organization Group (LOG) training event on the Title IV-E waiver will be held on Friday, July 27, at USC's Davidson Conference Center. This is a follow-up to the LOG meeting held last August, and will discuss with stakeholders and others the waiver implementation process and the plan being submitted to the Board of Supervisors. The first sequence of waiver activities will begin in July and will be monitored closely, and a second sequence will probably be initiated next January. Commissioners wishing to attend the LOG event should inform Executive Director Kim Foster so that slots can be reserved.

- In answer to a query from Chair Kleinberg about data collection for the waiver, Ms. Kerr said that Jackie Contreras (formerly Acosta), now with Casey Family Programs, is meeting with the State's designated evaluator and representatives from Alameda and Los Angeles counties to look at existing data and what additional information should be collected to capture the waiver's achievements.

A small Work Group has been convened for looking at internal DCFS data collection and the reports the department runs, with an eye to eliminating duplication and scaling back Ad Hoc demands on its overburdened information technology section. Commissioner Williams suggested filtering what Commissioners might request during a meeting through a Research Specialist, who could help narrow down the specific information desired and determine if an available report could provide it. Ms. Kerr noted that one of the positions to be funded by Casey Family Programs will be a research position.

In a future discussion, Chair Kleinberg would like to review reports the Commission should get, how often they should be received, and what they should look like. Ms. Kerr will make those connections once the research person is in place.

LOS ANGELES COUNTY GOVERNMENT REORGANIZATION

Lari Sheehan from the Chief Executive Office—formerly the Chief Administrative Office—summarized the changes in Los Angeles County's administrative governance structure now being implemented, beginning with some background.

Following retirement festivities in February for the County's Chief Administrative Officer, David Janssen; the Board of Supervisors was turned down by the second candidate to whom they had offered the CAO position. With Mr. Janssen's help, supervisors began to review the county's organizational structure, since that seemed to be a stumbling-block for qualified applicants. Since its founding, Los Angeles County has been organized as a charter county, with the charter document requiring the Board of Supervisors to serve as both executive and legislative branches. This means that the Board directly hires and fires all department heads with the exception of those elected by the people (the assessor, district attorney, and sheriff). By contrast, in other counties—including San Diego, where both Mr. Janssen and Ms. Sheehan came from—the Board hires and fires a single chief executive officer, who then is responsible for hiring and firing department heads. This is the model that Los Angeles County's Board of Supervisors had chosen to adopt.

A Charter Amendment must be approved by the voters, but the ordinance calling for this delegation of authority was passed by the Board on March 27 and adopted on April 26. Since that time, a guiding coalition of 17 department heads have formed transition teams to work through issues arising from the change and to develop an initial framework. County government is moving toward that structure, which will be fully effective July 1.

Ms. Sheehan distributed a handout detailing the transition, starting with a complex organizational chart of the previous structure, with 37 department heads reporting to the five members of the Board of Supervisors. “When everyone’s in charge,” she quoted Mr. Janssen as saying, “no one’s in charge.” Despite his and others’ efforts to ensure service integration and a ‘no wrong door’ approach to client services, collaboration and coordination among departments has depended primarily on the personalities of those involved, Ms. Sheehan said, rather than being institutionalized by the bureaucratic framework. With a single Chief Executive Officer in charge, working together will be easier.

The overall goals of the new structure are:

- **Improved accountability, avoiding the media-driven reactivity common in the past, and allowing the development of policies that will make everyone responsible for getting problems solved**
- **Customer-focused integrated services, integrating work across and within clusters of programmatic services**
- **Better communication, with the new CEO’s office, rather than individual departments, responsible for placing items on the Board agenda**
- **Increased interdepartmental collaboration**
- **Continuous process and organizational improvement, analyzing rules and regulations that may have been put in place in response to situations that no longer exist**

Constituent requests to Board offices will be handled in much the same way as they are now, but departments may not be instructed by the Board to perform functions outside their mission, budget, or scope of legal responsibility. The Board will give the CEO policy direction, and input will flow in both directions.

The handout included a chart showing how county departments and agencies have been grouped into five clusters that reflect the goals of the county’s strategic plan, each with a deputy CEO in charge:

- **Children and families’ well-being (Bryce Yokomizo, formerly head of the Department of Public Social Services)**
- **Health and mental health services (Sheila Shima)**
- **Community and municipal services (Lari Sheehan)**
- **Public safety (Doyle Campbell)**
- **Operations (deputy CEO to be named)**

In the ensuing discussion, Commissioners expressed grave concerns about the Probation and Mental Health pieces for children not being included in the Children and Families’ Well-Being Cluster, but in two others—Public Safety and

Health/Mental Health Services. In addition, one of the main reasons for the separation DCFS from the Department of Public Social Services in the early 1990s was because adult issues consistently overwhelmed the discussion, and the concerns of children (only 10 percent of the DPSS caseload) were lost. Once again, Chair Kleinberg observed, this chart shows children as the smallest entity in a cluster that includes DPSS, Community and Senior Services, Child Support Services, and others. If managers are held accountable for a Cluster's overall achievement, it may perform well with regard to adults, yet fail dismally in the children's arena.

Commissioner Curry expressed strongly her concerns that the new structure adds layers that further complicate the job of getting departments to work together, now that they must traverse cluster lines and involve numerous Deputy CEOs. How would the Commission's Prevention work have been accomplished within this framework? Many interdepartmental projects exist—the Title IV-E waiver, for instance, and Emancipation services—and combining budgets across two or more clusters will not be easy. Dually supervised children are particularly at risk, and all children need access to health, mental health, and substance abuse services, particularly the 42 percent of probation youth who cross over from DCFS.

To eliminate the stigma of young children being stamped with the 'Public Safety' label, Commissioner Curry recommended carving out a separate department for Juvenile Probation and moving it into the Children and Families' Well-Being Cluster. She further recommended removing the Human Relations Commission, Community and Senior Services, and Military and Veterans Affairs from the Children and Families' Well-Being Cluster, replacing them with the departments of Health Services and Mental Health. Vice Chair Rudnick agreed, remarking that once a structure is committed to paper, it can be very difficult to change.

Another issue is the retirement of Mr. Yokomizo. His short-term appointment as a Deputy CEO for the Children and Families' Well-Being Cluster will require yet another transition all too soon. Questions of procedure also arose: If the Commission has an issue to present to the Board of Supervisors, must it go through the cluster first? Must the submission be approved first by the deputy CEO and then by the CEO?

Policy planning and integration, Ms. Sheehan continued, will be achieved by customer-oriented discussions to evaluate implementation issues and service integration with representatives who are part of the implementation, as shown in the graphic on page 12 of the handout. Chair Kleinberg asked about fleshing out this process, noting that stakeholders are mentioned only once in the entire document, and the private sector not at all. It is not clear what representation ancillary organizations will have—the Children's Planning Council, the Education Coordinating Council, and First 5 LA, for example—nor how their roles will fit in. Once the new structure is in operation, Ms. Sheehan said, that should become more evident, and the county acknowledges that it cannot achieve its HST initiative—

Healthy Communities, Strong Families, and Thriving Children—without listening at the community level, which is a major cultural change.

Although one of the new structure's goals is accountability, Chair Kleinberg commented on the lack of mechanisms such as customer satisfaction surveys to determine whether or not people are being well served. Ms. Sheehan said that a countywide survey had been done earlier this year, and she will send those results to the Commission.

In the stakeholder planning process for the Mental Health Services Act, Vice Chair Sorkin said, the major push was for Adult Services, since many felt that children had their own funding streams and were considerably less likely to be severely mentally ill. In dealing with the MHSA's prevention and early intervention component, advocates must make sure that children have a voice. Commissioner Curry recalled that Commissioners were forced to make an enormous fuss before Transition-Age Youth were included in plans for the MHSA's community services and supports component. Without Commission intervention, those youth would have been allocated nothing. The Department of Mental Health never asked for input from children, families, or youth in its process, and never asked the Commission to be represented on the stakeholder planning group.

Commissioner Williams asked about the recommendation on the last page of the document to engage a consultant to evaluate the Board's commission structure. Ms. Sheehan explained that this process would examine the various commissions' structures, roles, and missions, not with the intent of eliminating any bodies, but to search for redundancies and overlap. Because the county has more than 200 commissions, the consultant would likely meet only with major entities, but would contact them all. Commissioner Curry stressed the importance of this Commission's continued focus on all children, not just those in foster care, and Chair Kleinberg emphasized the sadly inadequate care being given to Probation children, and how frustrating the lack of progress in that area has been.

Chair Kleinberg then returned to the insularity of the proposed governance structure, commenting that true service integration will not be possible without input from the private sector. Much hard work has been done to form a public/private partnership among constituents, the County, and private agencies so that decisions are made that accommodate the needs of people using county services. No outside entities were consulted in the development of this plan, and though it may work for the county, it may not serve customer needs. Because of the tight timeframe involved, Ms. Sheehan acknowledged that the Board offices and 17 department heads drafted the document without community input, but comments and critiques will be welcomed over the next year, prior to the charter amendment's appearance on the ballot in June 2008. In addition, the Economy and Efficiency Commission will perform an analysis of program and budgetary issues. The new structure is not a partnership, Commissioner Curry said, and a partnership did not put it together.

She particularly expressed her regret that the Commission was shut out of the development process, especially with its long history of advocating for a more efficient County structure. Ms. Sheehan apologized, saying that today's comments would be communicated, and things were not yet set in concrete.

From the audience, Danny Ramos from the Service Employees International Union 721 said that his organization shares the Commission's concerns about the new structure's lack of focus on children and families and its seeming reversion to 'silo' thinking. He asked if any similar structures elsewhere have enabled partnerships to successfully address children's issues. In San Diego County, Ms. Sheehan said, Children and Family Services fall under an overarching Health and Human Services Agency, which has worked well. That would have been her preference here, too, but planners feared that the management of Los Angeles' huge public health system—San Diego does not run county hospitals, while Los Angeles owns six—would overwhelm such an agency.

On Friday, a conference call is planned with Mr. Yokomizo and David Sanders, the former director of DCFS who is now with the Annie E. Casey Foundation and providing support to Los Angeles County during this transition. These and other related issues will be discussed, including the changing roles of the Chief Executive Office's Service Integration Bureau and the New Directions Task Force (top managers of health and human service agencies in the county). Chair Kleinberg urged Ms. Sheehan to include Probation in the conversation, as they are so often forgotten. Ms. Sheehan will e-mail Dr. Sanders a briefing of today's discussion to make that Commission input is heard.

In the interests of time, Chair Kleinberg asked Ms. Sheehan to return for a detailed discussion of the children's budget at another meeting. The budget distributed is an abbreviated version, and another will be released toward the end of the year that will be based on the final budget for the current fiscal year and the book closing for the past fiscal year. In a major change of direction, the children's budget is becoming much more of a performance- and outcomes-based document, a tool to give the CEO and department heads policy information as part of their budget decisions. The CEO's office is working with USC's Dr. Jacquelyn McCroskey to collect data that will allow a focus on particular populations of children, including transition-age youth.

When Ms. Sheehan returns, she was also asked to present information on customer service and satisfaction and on the future of the Service Integration Bureau, as well as an update on the discussion with Dr. Sanders. Chair Kleinberg requested that Mr. Yokomizo accompany her if possible.

Ms. Sheehan concluded her presentation by thanking Commissioners for the education on children and families they have given her over the last three years, which she said has been extremely rewarding.

YOUTH REPRESENTATION

Commissioner Worthy-Clayton updated the Commission on the efforts to increase Youth Representation/Participation with the Commission, and reported on the outreach efforts to contact the current Youth Representatives. Both Representatives were contacted in writing, acknowledging their effort and letting them know we missed them at the meetings. One young man has reached a point where involvement no longer fits into his schedule, she said, and the other has not yet responded to a letter asking him to call. As Commissioners consider how to fill these now-vacant positions, she outlined issues to be considered.

- What does youth representation mean to the Commission? How do youth who have been in the system bring their voices to the Commission's work, and how does involvement have a positive impact on their lives?
- How can barriers to participation be addressed—meeting time, downtown location, transportation challenges—especially for youth who are employed or in school?
- Can youth participate in ways other than attending general meetings, perhaps as part of a committee structure? Can Foster Youth work in the Commission office, as they have in the past? Can general meetings be held in other locations, as discussed previously?
- Stipends are not available to Youth Representatives, but some Commissioners are willing to sign theirs over. Can a system be set up to formalize this?

Commissioner Williams recommended asking the Board of Supervisors, which promotes Youth Representation on Commissions, to alter the stipend policy to mandate remuneration for youth, and also suggested issuing an open invitation to members of the California Youth Connection to send guest representation to any meeting. Commissioner Worthy-Clayton believes that Commission minutes should be more broadly distributed to young people's organizations, and that Probation youth should also be included. Commissioner McClaney proposed pairing up youth representatives with adult Commissioners in a 'buddy system,' making it easier for youth to feel comfortable at the table by maintaining an ongoing personal relationship.

A Board of Supervisors policy encourages county departments to hire former foster youth, and Commissioner Saville suggested that DCFS hire a young person and make the Commission office that individual's full-time assignment. (Ms. Kerr agreed that personnel items were available.) An employee's involvement would necessarily differ from that of an independent representative; the Commission serves as a 'critical friend' to the department, and DCFS staff in the past has been reluctant to criticize their employer in a public forum. Office staff could provide an alternate type of input, though, and Commissioners could take part in hiring interviews with department staff. Ms. Foster informed the Commission of some additional efforts to

explore having a Career Development Intern. Ms. Foster informed the Commission she has a meeting scheduled with DCFS's Anita Shannon to explore opportunities for linking with her program, which provides entry-level positions, and support with an eye to participants moving up the ladder to more permanent employment. Commissioners agreed that the two Youth Representative positions would be in addition to any formally hired youth staff, but Commissioner Williams suggested that part of the representative role might be to help out with office duties, perhaps in the day or two just prior to Commission meetings, making youth feel more like part of the process.

Ms. Foster has also spoken with Berisha Black about the possibility of the California Youth Connection providing quarterly updates on the issues its members are involved in, which former youth Representative Berisha Black agreed might be helpful in the Commission's agenda planning. Commissioner Savelle suggested that certain Commission meetings be dedicated to items Youth have identified as important, and Chair Kleinberg proposed participating in CYC's Speak Out meeting series. From the audience, CYC's Jacque Lindeman expressed great interest in helping with the Commission's work, and agreed that transportation and meeting times were often barriers to youth participation. If youth representative positions were paid, however, through stipends or other mechanisms, they would provide a great opportunity. She suggested recruiting through the Guardian Scholar Services and Renaissance Youth Leader programs, identifying individuals whose goal is to become involved in politics and who could arrange their school schedules around morning meetings.

Commissioner Worthy-Clayton and Executive Director will continue to explore options and report back to Commission.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

MEETING ADJOURNED